



www.michigantrails.org

P.O. Box 27187
1213 Center St.
Lansing MI 48909

Phone: 517-485-6022

Fax: 517-347-8145

April 1, 2009

The Honorable Patricia Birkholz
Chair, Senate Committee on Natural Resources and the Environment and
The Honorable Rebekah Warren
Chair, House Committee on Great Lakes and Environment

Dear Honorable Committee Chairs,

Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance wholeheartedly supports Senate Bills 388 and 389 and House Bills 4677 and 4678 in support of sustainable funding for state recreation facilities through an optional extra vehicle registration fee. This is an idea that has been tried and true in Montana. It can work here as well.

MTGA's mission is to foster and facilitate the building of an interconnected statewide trail system. The state's trails that are owned by the Department of Natural Resources under both Parks and Recreation and the Forest Management divisions are the real gems in the system. They are all railtrails, passing through miles of woods and farmlands and by lakes and streams, some of the best landscapes Michigan has to offer. There are very few crossings, not much interface with motorized traffic – they are family friendly for all ages, and for a multitude of uses whether it be running, hiking, bicycling, rollerblading, and equestrian or snowmobile use.

To this day, less than 1/3 of the state-owned trails are developed, and many have fallen into serious disrepair. After a local stir, the Legislature decided several years ago to drop all user fees on state-owned trails. Then with the weak economy, there was simply no money at all to keep them up. With surfaces eroded, rutted, and cracked, bathrooms closed, and many other issues, these gems have now become almost abandoned trailways.

The irony is that the public demand for trails is at an all-time high. Most all of the parks and rec. plans approved these days show trails ranking high in public surveys. The legislation proposed above allows the public to take action. I am convinced that most will do their part and pay the voluntary fee. In addition, the provision to provide local grants to communities for at least a percentage of the total will assure that local parks and trails will add to the system, and many times, connect to the state's arterial trails. The range of facilities represented in this proposal has something for everybody to support.

MTGA envisions a Michigan where our beautiful state parks have local trails linking them to nearby communities so that our tourists can access various services and amenities by walking or biking. It all adds to the enjoyment of their stay at our parks. Michigan has the capability to become a real trail mecca. We have the second highest railtrail mileage in the nation, at 1,569 miles. But, we need to improve these railtrails and maintain them well. This is what will bring the tourists and keep them coming back.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Krupiarz".

Nancy Krupiarz
Executive Director

